



05 June 2026

Submission – Children’s Online Privacy Code

About Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network

The Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) is the peak body representing the families of the more than 158,000 students enrolled in Queensland’s 239 independent non-state schools.

While independent schools are often referred to as “private schools”, Queensland independent schools are as diverse as the communities they serve, with schools catering for families from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and income levels. More families than ever before are also choosing to send their children to independent schools. This ongoing growth signifies the importance parents place on choice when it comes to where they send their children to school. The Independent sector gives families the opportunity to choose the educational experience or philosophy that best suits their child or family.

QIS Parents Network is regularly consulted by government and other education stakeholders on policy matters that affect the parents and carers of independent school children and attends a range of government and education sector meetings and feedback opportunities.

We are also a strong advocate for positive and respectful learning partnerships between schools, parents and children – a burgeoning area of research and school improvement known as ‘parent engagement’, which shows that learning and wellbeing benefits for children improve significantly when parents are given opportunities to partner with their school and value-add to learning.

From 2021–2023, QIS Parents Network funded a three-year research project into the ‘how’ of contemporary parent engagement. Since 2024 we have provided practical support for independent schools seeking to improve their parent



engagement practices through our flagship *Mastering Parent Engagement* programs and professional development opportunities. Read more about our parent engagement work with schools [on our website](#).

The QIS Parents Network is not-for-profit body governed by a Board of Directors. Its Executive Director is supported by a Consultative Committee of parents from small and large independent schools across Queensland, which helps ensure our contribution to reviews and consultation is reflective of the diverse independent school sector.

QIS Parents Networks thanks the Queensland Government and Independent Schools Queensland for its support since our organisation's inception in 2014, which allows us to fulfill our important work on behalf of Queensland families.

General comments on the Code

QIS Parents Network supports the intent of the Children's Online Privacy Code to strengthen protections for children's personal information.

However, feedback from families indicates that while the Code is strong in principle, there are significant concerns regarding:

- Scope and proportionality
- Practical implementation
- Regulatory burden on non state non-state schools (based on comments from the facilitator in our consultation session in May 2026 that non state non-state schools were "in scope")
- Enforcement and effectiveness

Without refinement, there is a risk the Code will be difficult to implement, inconsistently applied, and limited in impact.

QIS Parents Network strongly advocates that adequate additional resourcing is provided to allow for a comprehensive public and stakeholder information campaign about the new privacy requirements so that families and organisations are aware of what is changing and supported with implementation.

Objectives of the Code

The QIS Parents Network supports the objective of strengthening protections for children's personal information in online environments.

Families recognise that reform is necessary given the scale and complexity of data collection affecting children. However, feedback indicates that while the Code is appropriate in principle, its effectiveness will depend on:

- Clear scope

- Practical implementation
- Enforceability

Without these elements, the Code risks being aspirational rather than effective.

Best Interests of the Child

Families strongly support a best-interests-of-the-child framework. However, there is a clear view that the Code does not go far enough in recognising that:

- Children cannot meaningfully provide informed consent
- Responsibility should not rest on children or families to manage complex privacy decisions

Parents consistently indicated that:

Children's data should not be collected, used, or disclosed unless strictly necessary.

Recommendation:

- Strengthen the Code to adopt a privacy-by-default (prohibition-first) approach, with limited and clearly defined exceptions.

Online Services Covered by the Code

Families raised concerns about scope expansion, particularly the potential inclusion of:

- Non-state schools
- Childcare providers
- Small and non-commercial organisations

There is concern that:

- Lower-risk entities may face disproportionate obligations
- Regulatory focus may shift away from higher-risk actors

Recommendation:

- Clarify scope and prioritise high-risk, high-impact organisations (eg big tech companies and platforms)
- Apply a proportionate approach to education and care providers

Fair and Reasonable Use of Children's Personal Information

Families recognise the importance of limiting how children's information is used, but expressed concern that:

- Existing obligations are already substantial for non-state schools and providers
- Additional requirements may create significant administrative burden
- Capacity varies greatly across the sector

There is concern that compliance requirements may:

- Divert resources from teaching and student support
- Disproportionately impact smaller non-state schools and services

Recommendation:

- Introduce scaled obligations based on organisational size and capacity
- Avoid duplication with existing Privacy Act requirements

Transparency, Privacy Information and Children's Understanding

Families identified a significant gap between policy intent and real-world understanding.

Feedback highlighted:

- Low awareness of children's data collection practices
- Limited capacity for families to engage with complex policies
- Likelihood that non-state schools will act as the default communicators

Recommendation:

- Develop clear, plain-language privacy resources for families
- Ensure consistent messaging across affected sectors, particularly non state school sectors if they remain "in scope".
- Avoid placing responsibility for interpretation solely on education providers

Default Privacy Settings and Data Collection Practices

Families strongly support stronger controls on data collection and use.

There is a clear preference for:

- Privacy by default settings
- Limiting data collection to what is strictly necessary

Parents expressed discomfort with:

- Routine and cumulative data collection across a child's life
- Unclear boundaries around data storage, reuse and sharing

Recommendation:

- Strengthen requirements for data minimisation and privacy by design
- Clearly define limits on collection, retention and secondary use

Implementation and Guidance

Implementation was identified as the most critical risk area.

Families highlighted:

- Lack of clarity about who is responsible for rollout and communication
- Limited commitment to resourcing, training, and guidance materials
- Increasing pressure on non-state schools and time-poor families

Recommendation:

- Invest in:
 - Practical toolkits for non-state schools and providers
 - Training resources
 - Public awareness campaigns
- Provide sufficient lead-in time for implementation

Monitoring, Compliance and Enforcement

Families expressed scepticism about whether the Code can be effectively enforced.

Concerns include:

- Perceived ineffectiveness of existing digital regulation
- Fragmentation across multiple regulators
- Lack of clarity about compliance monitoring

Recommendation:

- Clarify regulatory roles and responsibilities
- Improve coordination across regulators
- Establish clear and visible enforcement mechanisms

Emerging Technologies and Risks to Children

Families recognise that children operate in an increasingly complex data environment, including:

- AI systems
- Facial recognition technologies
- Continuous digital and physical data collection

Concerns include:

- Long-term digital footprints
- Data breaches and misuse
- Emerging risks such as deepfakes

Recent incidents have reduced trust in online systems, with some families seeking to limit participation where possible.

Recommendation:

- Address the lifecycle and cumulative nature of children's data
- Strengthen requirements around security and long-term data management

Impacts on Access, Equity and Participation

Families emphasised the importance of maintaining, through technology use:

- Access to education
- Communication between children and families
- Connectivity for rural and remote communities

There is concern that overly restrictive settings may:

- Limit essential communication tools
- Disproportionately affect vulnerable families

Recommendation:

- Ensure the Code balances privacy protections and concerns of families around children's digital footprints with equitable access
- Consider impacts on rural, remote and boarding communities

Conclusion

The QIS Parents Network supports the introduction of a Children's Online Privacy Code. However, refinement is required to ensure it is:

- Proportionate
- Practical to implement
- Clearly understood by families
- Effectively enforced

Without these elements, there is a risk the Code will:

- Create significant administrative burden
- Generate confusion
- Fail to deliver meaningful improvements in children's privacy



We welcome continued engagement to ensure the Code achieves genuine, measurable improvements in children's safety and privacy.

ENDS